(Please) Call My Bluff

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at http://archiveofourown.org/works/44744200.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Hannibal (TV)
Relationship:	Will Graham/Hannibal Lecter
Characters:	Will Graham, Hannibal Lecter
Additional Tags:	Post-Episode: s03e13 The Wrath of the Lamb, Post-Fall (Hannibal), Will Graham and Hannibal Lecter in Cuba, Manipulation, Bluffing, (sort of) fake relationship, Light Angst, (sort of) seduction, Resistance is Futile, Kissing, overuse of the word hungry, Rutting, Frottage, Happy Ending, Prompt Fill, do not copy to another site, Podfic Welcome
Language:	English
Series:	Part 37 of Tiger's S4 Hannigram fics
Stats:	Published: 2023-02-03 Words: 4,673 Chapters: 1/1

(Please) Call My Bluff

by TigerPrawn

Summary

Hannibal and Will have started over in Cuba but the manipulations continue.

(please) call my bluff

They had been in Cuba for six weeks before Will realised he couldn't live like this.

It had been different on the boat. Chiyoh had been there, and they had both been healing. And whilst there were still little aches and pains here and there for both of them, life was settling into something that resembled normality. Or as normal as the two of them would ever get.

A new normal where Hannibal treated him like his husband, despite Will having done nothing to encourage that. With the possible exception of killing together and going over a cliff.

Will had lost count of the amount of times per day his conversation with Bedelia echoed around his mind.

Is Hannibal in love with me?

Do you ache for him

Will hadn't known the answer to that question until the split second he felt his body go weightless in the air and then weightless in the water. Then he knew. Couldn't live with him, couldn't live without him. Because he ached. He ached so deeply.

And now, every day, Hannibal made no effort to hide what Will had only glimpsed before.

He had been blind, he realised. Looking back on all those dinners, those conversations. Now he could see the flirting, the suggestiveness, he could feel those feelings. And, he further realised, had he not been raised in such a blinkered heterosexual way, he might have seen it all at the time for what it was.

Or at least what he hoped it was.

Now, he wasn't so sure. After everything. After all the things they had done to each other. Could it have ever been anything more than an attempt at manipulation? Now, after they had clung to each other in the water - after Will had clung so hard to him - did Hannibal think this game of his was working? Had that inability to hide his relief and desire cost Will in whatever this game was?

He tried to push the thoughts aside as he walked out of the small beachfront house and watched as Hannibal jogged back from the waves, wet and panting.

The sight had him almost hard.

Will sipped his coffee and closed his eyes, unable to ignore the heavy breaths as Hannibal slowed to a trot and then stopped. Just in front of Will now, close enough that Will felt the air swish as Hannibal picked up the towel hanging on the gate to their property.

“You should join me one morning,” Hannibal’s words were a warm rumble that Will simply responded to with a grunt.

Hannibal chortled and brushed past Will, making his skin prickle as hairs stood on end. He was always so close these days. Nothing too intimate, just… in Will’s space. Lingering looks had not become lingering touches, but there was the leaning in, the sitting close. Even just the way he walked past Will now, so close as to almost be touching despite having plenty of room.

And it didn’t seem like an intrusion. It seemed as though Hannibal had pulled down a few boundaries between them.

Will wanted him to pull down more. All of them. He wanted the promise of that closeness to be delivered upon. But he knew he couldn’t.

This was Hannibal controlling him. This was Hannibal manipulating him, as he had always tried to do.

And Will couldn’t continue to live like this. He had to fight fire with fire.

*

It started subtly.

Will didn’t dare rush this, so he wasn’t about to get up every morning and go swimming with Hannibal. But what he did was every morning get up a little earlier, until after a couple of weeks he was out of bed at the same time as Hannibal.

They would meet in the hallway or on the landing, Will would laugh lightly at them almost physically running into each other. Sometimes he’d put his hand on Hannibal’s bare arm as though to stop them colliding.

It was easy. Hannibal was receptive.

Within a month, Hannibal clearly came to expect Will there. No longer did he put on the coffee before going for his swim so that Will might enjoy it when he woke. Instead they made the coffee together, moving around each other in the small kitchen, laughing off light touches as they avoided colliding over the sugar and creamer.

It was so easy, it was painful. This casual domesticity that for Hannibal was a manipulation and for Will was a lie. A bluff. Something to draw Hannibal out, trap him. Play him at his own game. He wanted to call Hannibal’s bluff, or have Hannibal call his.

Desperately. So desperately he wanted that.

To get this over with. Admit the bluff, leave him, kill him, whatever it was Hannibal needed to do in order for this to all end.

Because it was painful. Bittersweet.

Will began to enjoy their new routine. It didn't feel fake. He didn't want it to be. But it had to be.

And it wasn't just the morning routine.

About two weeks into his getting up early and starting those precious morning moments with Hannibal, Will changed his afternoon routine too.

Whilst Hannibal almost always insisted on making them both something for dinner, lunch was a to-each-their own situation and Will had no plans to change that. It would be too big, too obvious. But after lunch, usually Hannibal would sit on the decking and read whilst Will would go to his room.

He had wanted the space at first. He'd needed to not feel the constant presence of the man. So he would read, or tie lures, sometimes he would tinker with little electronics he'd picked up here and there - motorised toys, robots that reminded him of a cousin he barely remembered. Several lifetimes ago it felt.

But now he didn't go up to his room. It hurt, not to have that alone time. But he found a different sort of peace doing those things with Hannibal instead. At first he had simply lingered longer and longer before going to his room. And then one day he had sat on the lounger next to Hannibal's and opened his book.

From then on Will read and tied and tinkered out on the decking. Sometimes in complete silence, sometimes one or both of them would make idle chat. Relaxed, unforced. Natural. It felt so good. It felt so real.

*

Three months passed and the new routines were long set. Aside from the light touches that now happened each morning as they danced around each other and the coffee pot, there was no physicality.

And that had to be the next step, Will realised.

He had to call that bluff. That hunger he saw growing brighter and yet darker in Hannibal's eyes as each day passed. Another manipulation. He thought he had Will now, had him trapped and under his control, and Will had to fight against that. Fire against fire, he reminded himself.

Fire against fire.

The mantra he recited in his mind to drown out Bedelia's words as he fixed his courage.

He often went to bed before Hannibal, who liked to prepare some fruit and oats the night before for breakfast in the morning. He always said goodnight, though that had started as a cursory grunt from the doorway. But over the weeks of Will's bluff, he had slowly increased this, as with everything else.

Now he would stop and chat for a few minutes. Sometimes he would come over and look over what Hannibal was preparing, sometimes he'd ask if Hannibal could make some for him too.

Tonight it was time. He needed to bring that physical element. Hannibal had not called out his behaviour yet, they were both still playing with each other, and so Will needed to take it to the next level.

"Overnight oats?" Will asked, coming closer than was necessary in order to see what Hannibal was placing in the small bowl.

"Indeed, with blueberries and honey." Hannibal replied in that soft, deep rumble that seemed to be the only way he communicated now. As if every word were dripping with love. Or so he wanted Will to think.

Will nearly stopped at that, anger and something much more sour twisting in his gut. But, he had to do this.

"It looks good," Will offered, stepping so that he was right behind Hannibal, peering over his shoulder. He was pressed almost to Hannibal's back as he reached a hand under Hannibal's arm and plucked a blueberry from the prep area.

"Mmm, tastes good." Will's words were barely more than a whisper next to Hannibal's ear. "Good night." He turned and walked away, dissecting why Hannibal had gone rigid and even seemed to shudder the closer he got. He was a good actor, he wore a convincing person suit. It would be almost impressive if it wasn't killing Will a little bit on the inside.

*

He didn't dare be so obvious as to repeat the good night antics straight away. So he went back to lingering, a little closer now. Went back to talking for a few minutes before saying goodnight.

It was another couple of weeks before Will knew he couldn't put off the inevitable any longer. And he really didn't want to. He wanted to be able to call Hannibal's bluff. He equally wanted to do everything that was necessary to do that, up to and including kissing the man. Kissing him and more.

Fighting fire with fire was harder when your flame grew so large and ardent. When it was all consuming.

Perhaps, Will considered, he didn't care if this was a manipulation. He didn't care what Hannibal was trying to get from him. Maybe he couldn't survive this, and maybe that was just fine. As long as he got to have Hannibal, at least for a little while.

Will poured himself a glass of water, took a swig and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand. All the while watching the strength of Hannibal's shoulders as he prepared some meat that he intended to marinate overnight.

This was it. It had to be.

Glass in hand, Will started out of the room, having to walk past Hannibal to do so.

And as he passed he did it.

“Goodnight,” Will said. Hannibal’s own response of pleasantries seemed to die on his lips as Will casually brushed a soft kiss against Hannibal’s cheek and carried on out of the room.

*

That was the first night Will heard it.

He was sure that it wasn’t the first time that Hannibal had masturbated in the months they had been in Cuba. Will certainly had taken care of himself as and when he’d needed to.

But this was the first time he’d heard the sounds.

Hannibal panting. Soft grunts. At first Will hadn’t registered what it was. He was returning from the bathroom after downing that glass of water, trying to calm his nerves after what he had done and what he might need - or want - to do next.

That’s when he had heard the heavy breaths, the pleasured sounds. And then a whispered, almost reverent, “Will, oh… Will…”

Will swallowed, his own cock plumping up in response, and his imagination easily supplying the scene behind the closed door.

He went back to his room and bit down on the pillow as he fucked into his own hand until completion.

*

There was no going back now.

And in truth, Will wasn’t sure he wanted to go back to those first few weeks. He’d miss the warmth, the company, the closeness.

He’d miss the way Hannibal purred goodnight after Will kissed his cheek more and more brazenly. He’d miss the sounds of Hannibal coming apart in his room later when he thought Will was sleeping.

He’d miss that satisfied, lazy smile on Hannibal’s face as he began kissing Will’s cheek in the morning when they made coffee together.

It was wonderful. It was beautiful.

But it was still a lie, a bluff no closer to being called. Will wondered how much further he could push this before Hannibal pushed him away and admitted his manipulations, or revealed himself in some other, likely more deadly, way.

He had his answer a couple of weeks after the cheek kissing had truly become routine.

The weather had been balmy since they had arrived, but a storm was coming in. As they sat outside on the decking, both reading in comfortable silence, the wind picked up. Not much at first, but some hard gusts suddenly ripping at their pages was enough to realise it was time to go in.

Hannibal had just stood, holding his hand out to Will and saying, “I think that’s our cue,” when the heavens opened and an immediate deluge was upon them.

Will sprang up so quickly he almost lost his book and his footing. He was saved by Hannibal pulling him close as they both tumbled through the open double doors into the house and fell to the floor.

The rain lashed down in sheets and Hannibal had the wherewithal to push the door closed with his foot and save them the soaking, before looking back to Will, who lay beneath him.

Their eyes locked and Will couldn’t tell if the shuddering breath was his or Hannibal’s. He only knew that there was a body pressed to his, one that he had wanted for longer than he’d even realised and one that he didn’t want to push away. He wanted to feel every inch of it. Even if it was a manipulation, even if it was fake, a means to an end. He didn’t care.

In a split second Will’s hand was around the back of Hannibal’s head and he was devouring his mouth in a hungry kiss. It was only a moment, a heartbeat of time, before Hannibal began to kiss him back.

They kissed breathless, writhing on the floor until Hannibal pulled away.

“You should… we should… get out of these wet clothes,” Hannibal panted as he began to try and pull Will’s t-shirt up. It was such a natural movement, one that had come from months of building up their level of intimacy. One that would obviously be the next step, rain or no.

Will groaned at the hands against his skin, at the now familiar sound of Hannibal’s heavy breathing.

The shirt only made as far as his arms before Hannibal was kissing him again, rutting against Will until Will spread his legs and Hannibal slotted between them.

Will groaned into Hannibal’s mouth as he pressed their hard cocks together, separated only by layers of lightweight summer fabric.

“Will, oh god…” Hannibal moaned as his mouth left Will’s and began to trace along his neck and shoulder. Nipping, sucking kisses that Will wanted more of, harder and deeper. He wanted to be bruised. He wanted to show signs of having had this, having had the Chesapeake Ripper.

His cock was all the harder for his thoughts and he rut his hips against Hannibal’s until they found a rhythm between them.

“I’ve waited so long, I needed you to make the first move. So that I knew. Knew for sure…” Hannibal babbled against Will’s heated skin.

And suddenly everything felt right. Too right. It felt wrong.

“Stop, stop…” Will wriggled, trying to get his arms free of his t-shirt in order to push Hannibal off of him. Before he could do so, Hannibal had heeded his words and sat up on his haunches between Will’s legs, no part of them touching.

There was confusion and hurt on his face. Expressions carved deeply on a man that Will so often found unreadable. Another ruse, he was sure. One that was now too painful to play along with.

“You win,” Will growled, pulling himself from under Hannibal and sitting up to face him. “Whatever it is you want, Hannibal. You win. It’s over. I can’t play these games any more.”

It took all Will had not to let his voice crack over those words.

“Will?” Hannibal frowned.

“I can’t do it. I… It doesn’t matter how much I want it, want you. I can’t fuck around with you just to call your bluff.”

“My bluff…” Hannibal repeated, not a question but confusion.

“I know you’ve been trying to manipulate me, Hannibal. It’s your M.O. You probably couldn’t even help yourself. Treating me like a life partner, some sort of domestic companion, trying to get me to let my guard down. Well I didn’t. I never did. All this,” he waved his arms around to indicate the place, the time, the day. “The kisses on the cheek, the companionable reading, the… coffee… whatever. It was all my bluff, trying to play you at your own game. But you win. I can’t…”

Will took a breath, realising his voice had pitched deeper and harder. He closed his eyes and rubbed the bridge of his nose between his thumb and forefinger.

“I can’t do this,” Will continued, gently, his voice beginning to break, “because I couldn’t make you sleep with me in order for you to maintain your bluff. You might be willing to go that far. But I’m not, not for me and not for you.”

Will opened his eyes to find Hannibal staring at him. His expression blank now but something was working hard and fast behind his eyes. Calculating how to pull the teacup back together, how to turn back time and manipulate Will better so that he hadn’t been caught out like this.

Or perhaps he was simply considering how he was going to dispose of Will’s body.

Or maybe, there could be the slightest chance, more of a hope really, that Hannibal hadn’t been bluffing at all.

The silence was deafening as Hannibal stood and walked away, closing the door to his room with a soft click.

*

The storm had been raging for hours.

After Hannibal had gone to his room, Will had secured the doors and then set to making sure all the windows were also secure. It was going to get humid, but that was better than having the place flooded or worse having a window ripped off its hinges.

It was all so sickeningly mundane.

When he finished those tasks, an emptiness settled within him, trying to eat that ache he felt. Trying to consume him like the fire had when he'd tried to fight Hannibal's fire with it.

The wind and rain lashed against the windows and it felt like being back in the Atlantic, those few dreadful seconds of being underwater before Chiyoh pulled them out. He felt like he was suffocating, drowning. More with every passing minute, the distance between he and Hannibal increasing as though the tides were pulling them apart.

Had he misjudged this whole thing? Had he misunderstood or misinterpreted? Should he have just asked? Just talked? They had always talked, about everything and nothing.

Conversations.

And yes, there had been so much said between the lines. So much unsaid. And manipulations, many of them. But they had still talked.

Will's unconscious pacing took him to Hannibal's door.

He could hear nothing from inside the room, the storm too loud.

He knocked, hard. Having to knock louder than the sound of the wind.

"Hannibal?"

There was no answer, though Will was unsure he'd be able to hear one as thunder began to rumble outside.

He should wait. Weather this storm.

But he couldn't. He knocked again, louder and then opened the door.

The room was dark, lit only by the flashes of lightning outside. The bed was empty and Will squinted to see the chair in the corner, unable to make out if it was empty or not.

He stepped into the room, moving closer to see.

"Hannibal?"

He was clear of the door only moments before it slammed behind him and a hand was around his throat.

“Was this all a game to you, Will?” Hannibal growled the words next to his ear. He should have been terrified, but all he could think of was the warmth of Hannibal’s hand on his throat and the closeness of his hard body.

“Hannibal,” his name came out on a shuddering breath and Will felt Hannibal tense.

“You have found my weakness, and you mean to exploit it. Exploit my compassion for cows, as you say…” Hannibal mumbled the words, and it was so very clear to Will how Hannibal must have memorised every interaction they’d ever had.

How he had done the same, consciously or not.

“Hannibal,” he said again, a plea this time as his hands went to the one at his throat. It was easy to gently pry the finger loose and raise them until he was able to press his lips to Hannibal’s palm.

“No more games,” Hannibal growled but he didn’t pull his hand away.

Thunder rumbled then cracked above them and startled them both to action. Hannibal’s hand went to his throat again, a gentle clutch of his fingers as he turned Will to him and their mouths met.

“No games,” Will breathed the words against Hannibal’s lips.

The kiss was tentative, but then hungry. Will’s hands gripped hold of Hannibal’s arms, pulling him closer. He wanted to consume and be consumed.

When they broke apart for breath Will looked at Hannibal’s eyes, red and dark. Just as they had been when they’d killed the dragon.

“I was waiting for you to call my bluff, I think… I think I wanted you to.” Will’s words came out in a rush.

“Because you thought I was bluffing, trying to manipulate you?” Hannibal’s words were a soft rumble, but there was an edge of pain there. Easily another manipulation, but Will didn’t care any more. He had to believe he wasn’t being manipulated, because the truth was he wasn’t sure he cared.

If he was being manipulated but was happy, did it matter?

“I did,” Will admitted, “perhaps I still do. But I don’t think I can save myself from you, and maybe that’s just fine.”

Hannibal’s breath was soft against Will’s lips and Will’s eyes darted to Hannibal’s mouth.

“No more games.” Hannibal growled, “I meant it, every look, every touch. Every kiss. You are my life now, Will. You were from the moment we met.”

“Manipulations and all,” Will muttered, his mouth hovering over Hannibal’s.

“Yes.” The word was a gasp as Will took Hannibal’s mouth again.

His hands cupped Hannibal’s face, fiercely. He held him tight as he kissed him hard, his tongue plundering Hannibal’s mouth hungrily. So hungrily that Hannibal seemed to take a moment to catch up. But after that long moment, he kissed back just as ferociously.

“Will,” he gasped into his mouth as his hands tore at Will’s clothing. Buttons pinged across the room, before Hannibal started on his trousers.

And that did make Will pause.

He was hard. Rock hard, but he had never done this before. Not with a man.

Until Hannibal he hadn’t even found a man attractive. And at first he hadn’t realised this was attraction. He had simply been intrigued by the way the man looked, dressed, carried himself. He liked the way their conversations made him feel. And with time, he felt that excited anticipation at seeing him, at flirting with him when he was supposed to be manipulating him. Those weeks before Hannibal sliced into him still made his heart flutter, regardless of what had come after, or before.

Sometimes there was simply no resisting.

And Will didn’t want to resist now, he just had no idea how to continue - as much as he wanted to.

“Hannibal, I…”

Hannibal stopped though he didn’t remove his hands, his fingers loosening their grip.

In response, Will tightened his own grip, sliding one hand behind Hannibal’s neck and pulling him back for some quick and hard kisses.

“I’ve never…”

“Will…” Hannibal breathed in deeply and then buried his face in Will’s neck. After a couple of heavy breaths, he began to lace light kisses along Will’s prickling flesh. His hands went back to undressing Will, but this time slower, more tender.

Will’s breath hitched every few touches as Hannibal’s warm hands came into contact with him.

It felt like hours, as hands smoothed over cloth and then skin, until finally Will’s shirt was gone and the kisses were along his shoulder. By the time Will’s trousers fell, his skin was humming with every touch, with every moment of anticipation.

When Hannibal pressed the length of his body against Will’s, his arms enclosing him as he kissed him deeply, Will groaned. His own cock all the harder for rubbing against Hannibal’s through one less layer of fabric.

Will didn't even realise how close they were to the bed until he was suddenly backed against it and being gently laid down on it, Hannibal hovering over him.

He felt the loss keenly when Hannibal stepped back to remove his own clothes, but he watched eagerly. His cock twitching in his boxers as each layer was peeled away.

When Hannibal got to his underwear, he hesitated, not pulling them down until Will gave a nod and began to wriggle out of his own. His eyes flicking between Hannibal's face, trying to gauge his reaction, and the cock hanging heavy between his thighs.

Will's breath hitched when Hannibal moved forward.

Anticipation, desire, and fear running through him. He trembled as Hannibal slowed as though scared of spooking a skittish animal.

Were mongooses skittish?

The thought went through Will's mind, remembering the morning that Hannibal brought him breakfast. That had been flirting, he realised now.

Will reached up, grabbing Hannibal behind the neck once again and drawing him down, opening his legs so Hannibal could slot between them.

The kiss was rough, consuming. Will moaned into Hannibal's mouth as their bodies met, Hannibal's furred chest against his smooth one, their hard cocks pressed together, both leaking.

Will wrapped his arms tight around Hannibal, crushing them together as they kissed hard and moved against each other.

Hannibal grunted above him, his hips moving, rocking as Will met each movement with his own hips. Their precome helped the slide, the sensation of Hannibal's sliding foreskin against his own cut cock was mesmerising, a sensation that made him leak all the more.

Minutes passed with each movement becoming all the more frenetic. No longer able to kiss as they panted for breath and writhed against each other.

"Can you come like this?" Hannibal muttered the question, his worlds a rumble against Will's ear.

And almost came from the words alone.

Instead he nodded enthusiastically and rut his hips all the more.

It felt so good. Not just the new sensations, as unexpectedly erotic as they were, but the intimacy of it all. Intimate in a way he'd never known, like he was able to crawl into Hannibal's skin.

"Fuck… Yes…" Will managed to get out the words and Hannibal began to kiss him again. Kissing and rutting, their bodies moving together as one until-

Will cried out, breaking the kiss as he came hard between them. His come lubricating the way as Hannibal increased his own thrusts and followed him over the edge moments later.

They breathed together, Hannibal a heavy weight on him now and their spill between them, warm and wet on his belly. It was surreal. It was perfect. Beautiful in the fiercest of ways.

Will pulled Hannibal down into another kiss - soft this time. No more bluffing, no more manipulations, he knew that now. Because after the raw intimacy he had just experienced, he knew he could never be anything but entirely honest with Hannibal from now on.

Hannibal's kiss, and the sigh he fed Will through it, made Will sure that the same was true for Hannibal.

There could be no more bluffing between them, the walls were all gone now. They knew each other too well. They knew each other intimately.

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